

The Latino Vote in the 2010 Elections

Mark Hugo Lopez
Associate Director
Pew Hispanic Center

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Overview

Tuesday's midterm elections were historic for Hispanics. For the first time ever, three Latino candidates—all of them Republicans—won top statewide offices. In New Mexico, voters elected the nation's first Latina governor, Republican Susana Martinez. In Nevada, Republican Brian Sandoval won the governor's race and became Nevada's first Hispanic governor. And in Florida, Republican Marco Rubio won the U.S. Senate race.¹

Despite these big top-of-the-ticket wins for Republican Hispanic candidates, Democratic candidates won the Latino vote, usually by wide margins. For example, according to the national House exit poll,² 60% of Latino voters supported Democratic candidates in House races while 38% supported Republican candidates.

This majority support for Democratic candidates continues a pattern among Latino voters. In 2006, according to the national exit poll, 69% of Latinos voted for Democratic candidates in their Congressional district races, while 30% supported Republicans.³ In the 2008 presidential election, Latinos supported Democrat Barack Obama by a margin of more than two-to-one over Republican John McCain—67% versus 31% according to a Pew Hispanic Center analysis of the national exit poll ([Lopez, 2008](#)).

The candidacies of Republicans Rubio and Sandoval drew sharply different levels of support from Latino voters. In Florida, Rubio captured 55% of the Latino vote in his race for the Senate—identical to the share of the white vote he won (55%). In Nevada, however, Sandoval won a third (33%) of the Latino vote in his race for governor; he did much better among whites, winning 62% of the vote according to the state exit poll. No exit polls were done in New Mexico, so it is not possible to analyze the voting patterns among Latinos and other groups in Martinez's victorious gubernatorial campaign.

According to the national House exit poll, Latinos represented the same share of all voters this year that they did in 2006—8%. Overall, more than 19 million

¹ According to election results as posted by CNN, five Hispanic Republican candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives have won their elections. While final election results are not in, the partisanship of the Hispanic Congressional delegation is likely to become more Republican.

² The analysis in this report is limited results from the national House exit poll and exit polls from five states. These states are Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, and Texas. Updated voter survey results from the National Election Pool's National Exit Poll and State Exit Polls were obtained from CNN's [2010 election website](#) on Thursday, December 30, 2010 at 3PM EST. The House National Exit Poll and State Exit Polls are conducted by Edison Research.

³ These results were reported by CNN on its [2006 election website](#).

Latinos were eligible to vote⁴ in this year's midterm elections, more than in any previous election ([Lopez, 2010](#)). Latinos also represent a growing share of all eligible voters and substantial shares of eligible voters in many states. More than 9% of eligible voters nationwide are Latino, up from 8.6% in 2006 ([Pew Hispanic Center, 2006](#)).

With the exception of Florida, in states where exit polling data is available, Democratic candidates won the Latino vote, usually by wide margins. In California's senate race, Democrat Barbara Boxer won 65% of the Latino vote while Republican Carly Fiorina won 29%. In California's gubernatorial race, Democrat Jerry Brown won 64% of California's Latino vote while Republican Meg Whitman won 31%. In Nevada, Latinos supported Democrat Harry Reid over Republican Sharron Angle by a greater than two-to-one margin—69% versus 30%. Latino voters in Arizona, Nevada and Texas similarly supported Democratic candidates over Republican candidates in Senate and gubernatorial races.

In Florida Hispanic voters gave greater support to Republican candidates than elsewhere. As noted above, in Florida's Senate race, more than half (55%) of Hispanic voters supported Republican Rubio over Independent Charlie Crist (25%) and Democrat Kendrick Meek (20%). In Florida's governor vote, 48% of Hispanic voters supported Democrat Alex Sink and half (50%) supported Republican Rick Scott, according to the state exit poll. The Hispanic vote in Florida has traditionally tilted more Republican than in other states, owing largely to the presence of the GOP-leaning Cuban-American community.

Just as in previous elections, Hispanics nationwide voted differently than white non-Hispanic voters. According to the national exit polls, white non-Hispanics supported Republican congressional candidates over Democratic candidates 60% to 37%. In 2006, half (51%) of white non-Hispanics voted for Republican candidates and 47% voted for Democratic candidates. In many state races, Republican candidates won the white non-Hispanic vote while Democratic candidates won the Latino vote.

This report contains an analysis of exit poll results for the Latino vote nationally in the U.S. House of Representatives races. It also contains an analysis of gubernatorial and Senate races in the states of Arizona, California, Florida and Nevada, and the gubernatorial race in Texas.

⁴ An eligible voter is a U.S. citizen 18 years of age or older.

Reweighting of the 2010 National Election Pool's National and State Exit Polls

The vote share results shown in this report reflect updates to the National Election Pool's national and state exit polls as of Wednesday, December 30, 2010. The reweighting resulted in changes in the Republican vs. Democratic share of the Latino U.S. House vote nationally as well as in several statewide races.

About this Report

Exit poll results for this report were obtained from CNN's Election 2010 website and are based on the Edison Research's national and state exit poll surveys of voters as reported on December 30, 2010. In addition to an analysis of the national Latino vote, five states were examined. These states are Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada and Texas.

A Note on Terminology

The terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" are used interchangeably in this report.

The terms "whites," and "blacks" are used to refer to the non-Hispanic components of their population.

About the Author

Mark Hugo Lopez is the associate director of the Pew Hispanic Center. Prior to joining the Center, Lopez was research director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement as well as an assistant professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. His areas of expertise include Latino youth, crime, labor economics, civic engagement and voting behavior. He received his Ph.D. in economics from Princeton University.

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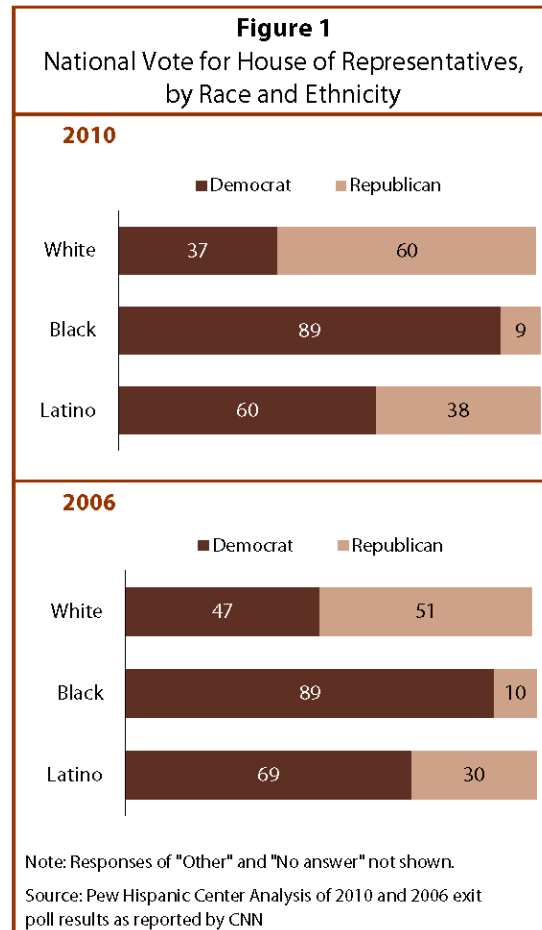
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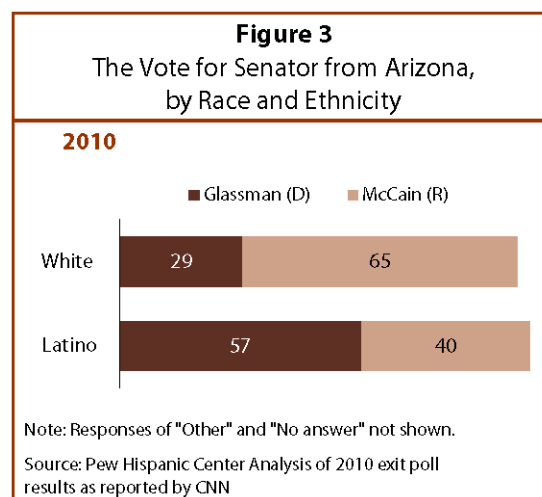
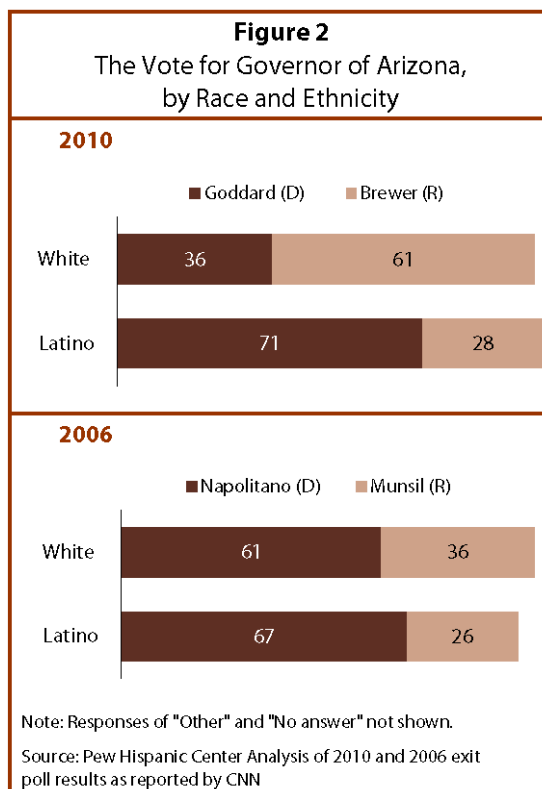
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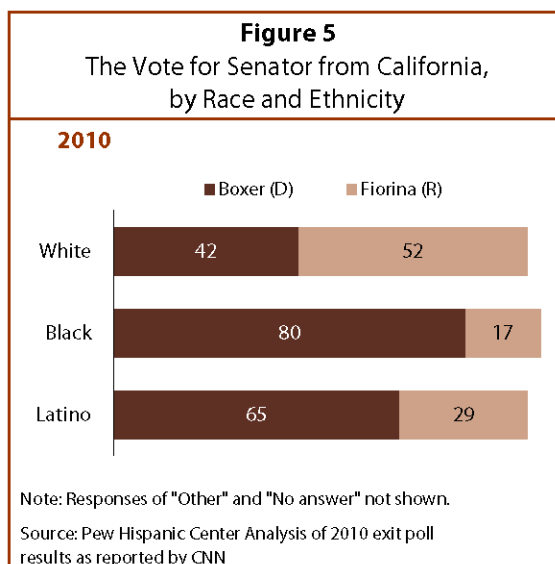
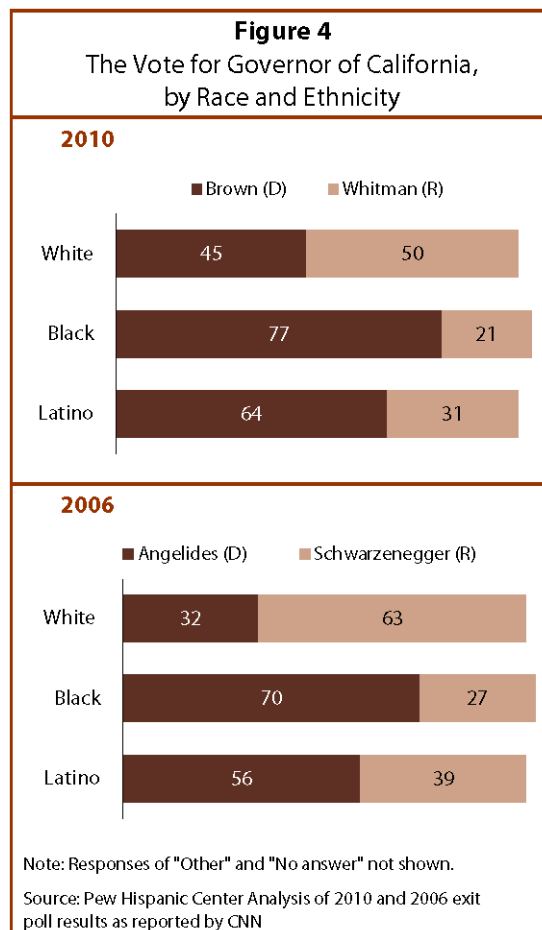
National House Results



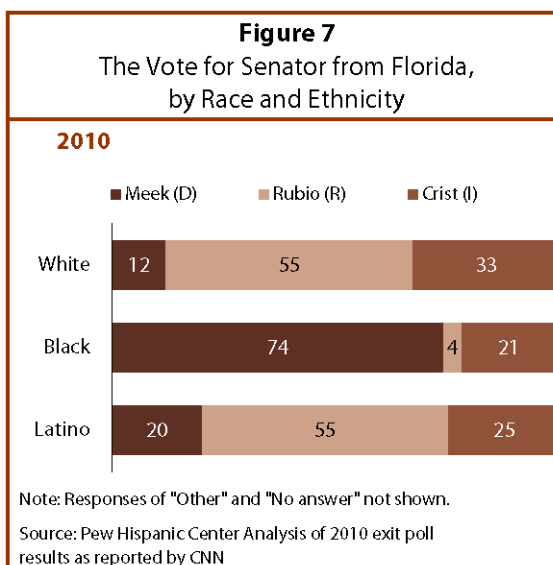
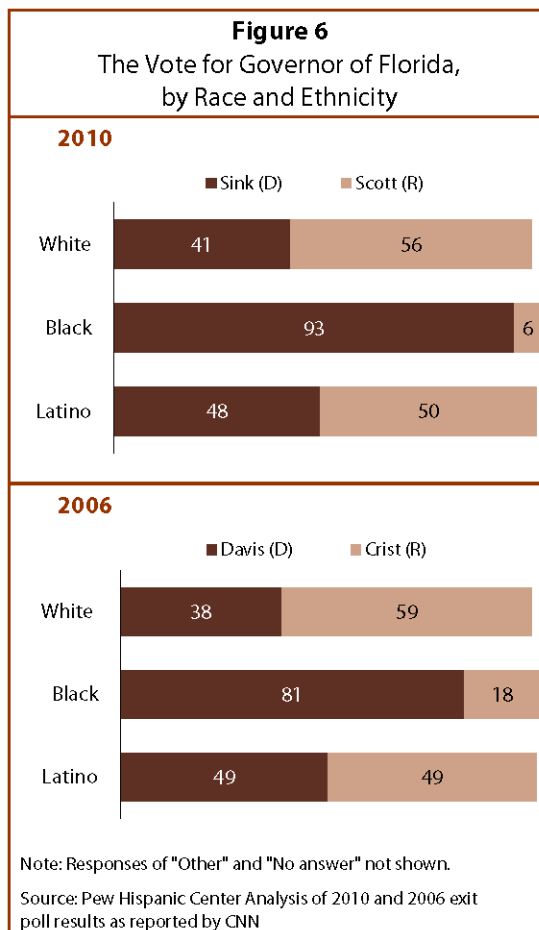
Results for Arizona



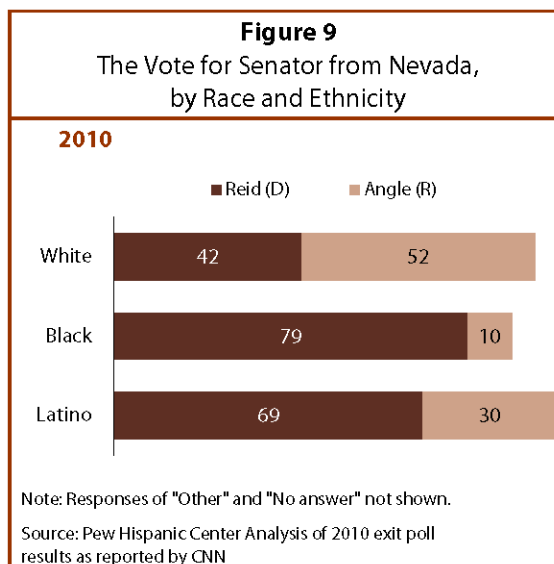
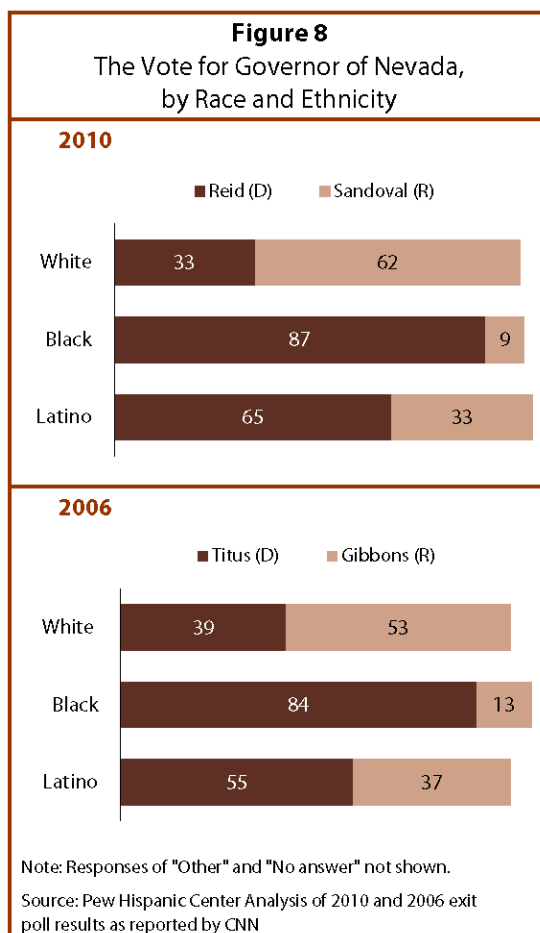
Results for California



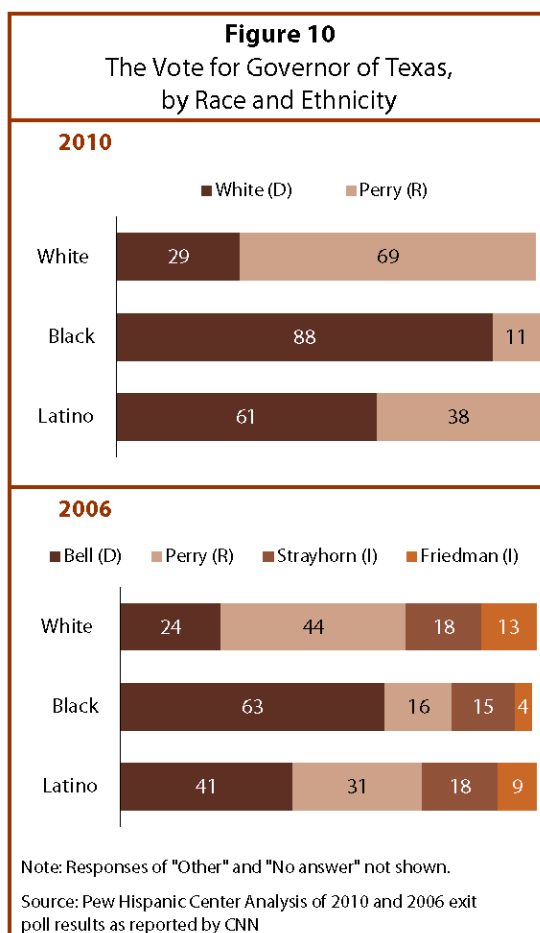
Results for Florida



Results for Nevada



Results for Texas



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